The LORD’s Passover

Exodus 11:1-12:28

Key Verse: 12:13 “The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.”

 Last Friday was the 100th anniversary of the March 1st Movement (Sam Il Jeol) of Korea, the national movement for freedom and independence of Korea from Japanese occupation. In March 1st, 1919 the movement, which had started with several girl high school students and spread to the whole country, brought millions of Koreans out in the streets to proclaim the independence of Korea. In the middle of this non-violent national independence movement, tens of thousands of Koreans were killed and arrested by the Japanese police and military, including the girls students. Since then, Korea has celebrated this movement every year to commemorate the spirit of the movement. Freedom is not free. We live in the land of freedom, America, but there are many people who died for the freedom of this country.

 In today’s passage Pharaoh and the Egyptians paid a tremendous and fatal cost for the freedom of the Israelites. This was the result of their disobedience to God’s will and God’s demonstration of justice over evil. This was also a prelude for the Israelites’ Exodus and the first step of their long journey to the Promised Land. Let’s study how God delivered his people, the Israelites, out of Egypt, how the Israelites prepared their Passover, and what the Passover meant to them and to us.

First, the plague on the firstborn (11:1-10) Thus far, God had brought the nine plagues on Pharaoh and the Egyptians so that they would listen to God and let the Israelites go and worship him. But Pharaoh did not listen to God, even though he had suffered from the nine plagues. Then God told Moses about one more plague, which would finally make Pharaoh surrender. What was it? In verses 4-8 Moses told Pharaoh. “***So Moses said, “This is what the LORD says: ‘About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the female slave, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt---worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any person or animal. Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.***” God would strike all the firstborn in Egypt, whether they were people or animals. But God would not touch any firstborn animal in Israel so that the Egyptians might know that this came from the Lord, who is God. This reminds us of Pharaoh’s order to kill all the Hebrews newborn baby boys at Moses’ birth in chapters 1 and 2. (1:16) This is also a parallel with King Herod’s edict to kill all the baby boys under two in Bethlehem when Jesus was born. However, God’s message to Pharaoh and the Egyptians was redemptive. Our God was patient with them so that they might fear God and obey his word. But Pharaoh hardened his heart and rejected God’s word. We are reminded of Romans 2:5, “*But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed*.” We should not ignore God’s warnings of judgment. We should not take God’s wrath lightly. Stubbornness and unrepentant hearts bring us fatal punishment and eternal condemnation. The day will come when we all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. He will judge us according to what we have done on this earth while in the body, whether good or bad. (Ro 2:6-8, 2 Co 5:10)

Second, the preparation for the Passover (12:1-13) Before God brought the deadly plague on Egypt, he called Moses and Aaron and gave them instructions about how to prepare the LORD’s Passover. Look at verses 2-11. “***This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lambfor his family, one for each household. If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. Do not eat the meat raw or boiled in water, but roast it over a fire—with the head, legs and internal organs. Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord’s Passover.”*** The first month of the Jewish calendar is called “*Aviv*”, which means “the barley had headed.” (Ex 13:4) Later they call it ‘*Nisan*’ in the Babylonian calendar. According to their present calendar, Aviv is around at the end of March or the beginning of April.

The preparation of the Passover started with God’s detailed instructions about when to start, what and how to eat, what to wear, and what kind of attitude to have. On the tenth day of Aviv, each family of the Israelites had to choose a year old male lamb without defect and keep it until the fourteenth day of the month. On the evening of the fourteenth day all the members of the community had to slaughter the lamb and take some its blood and put it on the sides and top of the doorframes of the houses where they lived. On the same night they had to eat the Passover meal with the roasted lamb along with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. Eating bitter herbs was to remind them of their painful and bitter servitude in Egypt, and eating unleavened bread was to commemorate their hasty departure. God also told them how to eat it: with their cloak tucked into their belt, their sandals on their feet, and their staff in their hand, which meant eating the meal with a ready-to-go spirit. The Israelites had to leave early the next morning. They didn’t have time to enjoy food and fellowship (12:39).They had to be prepared for ready-to-go!

What was God going to do while the Israelites were eating the Passover meal? God judged Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Look at verses 12-13. “***On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.***” As God had promised several times through Moses, God would judge the Egyptians by destroying all the firstborn of the people and animals in Egypt. There would be loud wailing throughout Egypt because of the deaths of their firstborn. But the destroyer, the agent of God, would pass over the houses in Israel because of the blood of the lambs stained on the doorposts of their houses. The LORD said, “*The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you*.” How could the destroyer distinguish the Israelites from the Egyptians? It was by the blood of the lamb. The blood would be a sign for the Israelites of their salvation.

In the New Testament Jesus Christ is described as the Passover Lamb and his blood is the sign of our salvation from God’s judgment over our sins. When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him, he said, “*Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*.” (Jn 1:29) John the Baptist saw Jesus as the Lamb of God, who would be sacrificed on the cross to save us from our sins. Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 5:7, *“…For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed*.” The apostle Peter was with Jesus for three years as his top disciple. He said about the blood of Jesus in his first letter to the believers, “*but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*” (1 Pe 1:19)

Why and how did the blood of Jesus become the sign of our salvation? The blood of the lamb stained on the doorposts of the Israelites saved all the Israelites who came out of Egypt and were brought into the desert. While they were wandering in the desert, they all died without seeing the Promised Land. But the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, saved not only the Israelites, but also all peoples of all nations who believe in him and his blood. The blood of Jesus has power to cleanse all our sins (1 Jn 1:7) The blood of Jesus not only saves us from our sins, but also brings us into our eternal promised land, the Kingdom of Heaven. This is because the blood of Jesus has power to forgive all our sins and to make us children of God. Hebrews 9:22 says, “…*without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness*.” Paul said in Romans 3:23-26, “*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood---to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished---he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justified those who have faith in Jesus.”*According to Paul, the blood of Jesus is the sign for our redemption and justification: redemption from the slavery of sin and justification from the price of sin.

In the last day, the day of God’s judgment, how can God tell his chosen people from the unbelievers? How can he distinguish between those who will be saved and those who will be punished? How can God know those who are going to heaven and those who are going to hell? The blood of Jesus is the sign. The mark of the blood of Jesus, the precious Lamb of God, will make Him know who are his. The mark of the blood of Jesus through faith in him will determine our destiny, between heaven and hell. It does not matter where you are at that time. The blood of Jesus in your heart will be the sign for your location and your salvation. Some will be recognized by the blood of Jesus while they are studying at school. Others will be lifted up while they are traveling. Still others will be saved while they are suffering in the name of Jesus Christ. Whoever we are, wherever we are, and whatever we do, the blood of Jesus will be the sign for our salvation and our eternal destination. Do you have the blood of Jesus in your heart? Is your heart stained by the blood of Jesus, who was sacrificed on the cross for your sins? If you don’t have it, please have it now by confessing that Jesus is the Lord and Savior who died for your sins, and by believing in him in your heart. If you are not sure, repent and make it clear through your repentance. When the angel of God looks for his chosen ones, let him find the mark of the blood of Jesus in your heart easily and quickly. When Jesus comes again to judge this world, both the living and the dead, he will not value how much you have achieved in this world, how much you contributed to your community, how much money you have, or how many children you have, but he will seek the mark of his blood. The blood of Jesus is the only sign for our salvation and the assurance of our eternal life. Amen!

Third, the celebration of the Passover (14-28) In verses 14-20 God gave instructions for how to prepare the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Look at verse 17. “***Celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come***.” This festival was to commemorate the day of Exodus. From the evening of the fourteenth day to the evening of the twenty-first day of the first month, all the assembly of Israel had to celebrate this day by eating bread made without yeast. During these seven days no one could work except for cooking food. This festival was to teach their children to remember the work of God for their ancestors. Even Jesus celebrated this festival with his disciples a few days before he was sacrificed as the Lamb of God. But Jesus himself is the bread of life. In John 6:51 Jesus said, “*I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*” These days we don’t have to eat the unleavened bread for seven days because Jesus himself is the bread of life. Amen!

In verses 21-28 Moses instructed the Israelites concerning the celebration of the Passover. Moses asked them to go and select a lamb without blemish and kill this Passover lamb. They had to take some of its blood and put it on the top and on both sides of the doorframes of their houses. No one was allowed to go outside during the night while the destroyer was passing through the land, striking down the Egyptians. When he saw the blood, he would pass by that doorway. The blood would be the sign for exemption from the deadly plague. After giving this instruction, Moses asked them to obey the Lord and keep this celebration as a lasting ordinance for them and for their descendants. (24)

On the night Jesus was arrested, he established a new covenant in his blood with his disciples. Jesus took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “*Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins*.” (Mt 26:27,28) The blood of Jesus is the sign of a new covenant for the forgiveness of our sins. On the last day the angel will be looking for the blood of Jesus in us. Those who have the blood of the Lamb Jesus will overcome the world. Revelation 12:11 says, “*They (the believers) triumphed over him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death*.” Do not drop out from your life of faith. Do not give up your spiritual struggling until the day of God’s judgment comes. Do not go outside until the morning. Who are the final winners? They are the ones who keep the mark of the blood of Jesus to the end! May God richly bless you when your names are written in the book of life in heaven!